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## CATHOLICS AND THE NEGRO

In order to understand and to gain an adequate idea of what Catholics and their ancient Church have done for the American Negro, it is necessary to take into account the facts and testimony of impartial history in regard to human slavery among the nations, and the influence which the Roman Catholic Church brought to bear on that institution. We must study and remember the conditions and customs in pre-Christian times in regard to slaves, and we should also note the gradual transition from the state of things existing in the heathen world to that prevailing in our modern Christian civilization.

The student of history observes that ideas and principles take their rise and, growing, permeate society, bringing about a change in the morals and manners of a nation. These changes, which may be for good or evil, do not come of a sudden. Even during the Christian ages the principles of the gospel do not always prevail in their fulness and beauty. At times, through the passions of men, non-Christian and pagan ideas gain ground and for a time predominate. It is only by dealing tactfully with human nature and by persistent efforts that the Church has been enabled to make Christian ideals prevail.

At the dawn of Christianity, slavery was an established institution in all countries.<sup>1</sup> Some pagan philosophers, like Seneca, maintained that all men are by nature free and equal, still by the law of nations slavery was upheld in all lands; and it was an axiom among the ruling classes, that "the human race exists for the sake of the few." Aristotle held that no perfect household could exist without slaves and freemen and that the natural law, as well as the law of nations, makes a distinction between bond and free.<sup>2</sup> Plato

<sup>1</sup> Dollinger, "The Gentile and the Jew," II, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, "Politics," I, 3-4.

avowed that every slave's soul was fundamentally corrupt and should not be trusted.<sup>3</sup> The proportion of slaves to freemen varied in different countries, though usually the former were largely in excess of the free population. In Rome for a long time, according to the testimony of Blair, the slaves were three to one. At one time they became so formidable there that the Senate, fearing that if conscious of their own numbers the public safety might be endangered, forbade them a distinctive dress. Atrocious laws regulated the relations of master and slaves. The head of the family was absolute master of his slaves, having over them the power of life and death. Moral and social degradation was the common lot of slaves. Their wretched condition in pagan times was often rendered more intolerable by aggravating circumstances. Many of them had once enjoyed the blessings of freedom, but had been reduced to bondage by the calamities of war. Unlike the Negro slaves of America, they were usually of the same color as their masters; and in some instances, better educated, more refined, and of more delicate frame, than those whom they served. Epictetus, one of the ablest of the Stoic philosophers, was a slave. Horace and Juvenal were the sons of freedmen.<sup>4</sup>

There is something of the ruthlessness of the ancient pagans in the atrocities practiced in later times, and even in our day, by the Mohammedans in Africa. Livingstone, Cameron, and still more recently Cardinal Lavigerie, Archbishop of Carthage, who was furnished with information by his missionaries, declare that at least 400,000 Negroes are annually carried into bondage in Africa by Mussulman traders, and that fully five times that number perish either by being massacred in the slave hunt, or from hunger and hardship on the journey. Thus the lives or liberty of an immense number of the human race are each year sacrificed on the altars of lust and mammon. No pagan government of antiquity ever framed any law aiming at the imme-

<sup>3</sup> Plato, "The Laws," VI, p. 233.

<sup>4</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, "Our Christian Heritage," pp. 416-420.

diate or gradual extinction of slavery. The same is true of modern nations outside the pale of Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

With the life and teaching of Christ and the preaching of his gospel by his Apostles, began a new era in the history of slavery. The Apostles and their successors pursued a policy that without injustice, violence or revolution, led to the gradual emancipation of the slaves. The labors and influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which have been that of organized Christianity, make a long story, reaching through all the Christian ages. The early Church mitigated the condition of the slave, by teaching him the consoling doctrines of Christ. She taught the slave and master reciprocal duties, prescribing laws that exercised a salutary restraint on the authority of the one, and sanctified the obedience of the other; she contributed to the moral elevation of the slave by leveling all distinctions between bond and free in her temples and religious assemblies.<sup>6</sup> Masters were encouraged to emancipate their slaves by a public ceremony of manumission celebrated in the church on festival days. The dignity and duty of labor for all is inculcated by St. Paul and the early Christian teachers in opposition to the pagan practice, which scorned labor as being only fit for slaves. The absolute religious equality proclaimed in the Church was the negation of slavery as practiced by pagan society. The Church made no account of the social condition of the faithful. Bond and free received the same sacraments. Clerics of servile origin were numerous. The very Chair of St. Peter was occupied by men who had been slaves—Pius in the second century and Calistus in the third.<sup>7</sup> The names of slaves are numbered among the martyrs of the Christian faith and they are inscribed on the calendar of saints honored by the Church.

In giving them a place in religious society, the Church restored to slaves the family and marriage. In Roman law, neither legitimate marriage nor regular paternity, nor even

<sup>5</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, "Our Christian Heritage," p. 432.

<sup>6</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, "Our Christian Heritage," pp. 429-430.

<sup>7</sup> P. Allard, "Les Esclaves Chrétiens," p. 215.

any impediment to the most unnatural unions had existed for the slave. In upholding the moral dignity and prerogatives of the slave, the Church was striking a blow for his civil freedom. Though she was not charged with the framing of the civil laws, she moved the hearts of the slave-owners by moral suasion, and she moulded the conscience of legislators by an appeal to the innate rights of men. In the early Fathers of the Church, like St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom, the most energetic reprobation of slavery may be found.

The redemption of captives was another work which engaged the pious solicitude of the Church. From the fourth to the fourteenth century Europe was periodically a prey to northern invaders. The usual fate of the vanquished was death or slavery. They who escaped were carried into bondage. A more wretched fate awaited the female sex, for they were reserved to gratify the caprices of their conquerors. Religious orders were founded to succor and redeem them.<sup>8</sup> "Closely connected with the influence of the Church," says Mr. Lecky, "in destroying hereditary slavery, was its influence in redeeming captives from servitude. In no other form of charity was its beneficial character more continually and more splendidly displayed."<sup>9</sup>

Among the forces enlisted in the cause of freedom the most potent came from the Papacy. In every age the voice of the Popes resounded clearly throughout the world in the interests of human freedom. They either commended the slaves to the humanity of their masters, or advocated their manumission, and also condemned the slave trade with all its abuses. Pope Gregory the Great, who occupied the chair of Peter from 590 to 604, wrote: "Since our Blessed Redeemer, the Author of all life, in His goodness assumed our human flesh, in order that by breaking the bond of servitude in which we were held, the grace of His divinity might restore us to our original liberty, it is a wholesome deed by the benefits of emancipation to restore the freedom in which

<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *op. cit.*, p. 436.

<sup>9</sup> Lecky, "History of European Morals," Vol. II, p. 76.

they were born, to men whom nature, in the beginning brought forth free, and whom the law of nations has subjected to the yoke of slavery.”<sup>10</sup>

On October 7, 1462, Pope Pius II issued a letter in which he reproved and condemned the slave trade then carried on. Again, a short time later Leo X denounced slavery in 1537. Paul III forbade the enslavement of the Indians. In the later centuries on the revival of slavery by some of the nations, especially among those coming under the power of Mohammedanism in Persia, Arabia, Turkey and Africa, as also on account of the enslavement of Negroes and Indians in the Americas, other Popes proclaimed the Christian law in regard to the cruelties of the slave trade. Again Urban VIII, in 1639, and Benedict XIV, in 1741, were defenders of the liberty of the Indians and blacks even though they were not as yet instructed in the Christian faith.<sup>11</sup> In 1815, Pius VII demanded of the Congress of Vienna the suppression of the slave trade. In the Bull of Canonization of St. Peter Claver, one of the most illustrious adversaries of slavery, Pius IX speaks of the “supreme villainy” of the slave-traders. Gregory XVI, in 1839, published a memo-

<sup>10</sup> St. Gregory I, “Letter VI.”

<sup>11</sup> In treating of an early period of Spanish American history, undue importance seems to be given by some writers and historians, such as Bancroft, Robertson and Blyden, to the fact that Bartholomew de Las Casas, Bishop of Chiapa, when before the Court of Charles V of Spain, in 1517, counseled that Negro slaves take the place of Indians, as he considered the Negroes a hardier race. Other reliable authorities, such as Fiske and MacNutt, claim that Las Casas merely tolerated for a time, what already existed and what he could not prevent. All agree that Las Casas in later life bitterly regretted having approved of slavery under any form or condition whatever. John Fiske, in his “The Discovery of America,” Vol. II, p. 458, says, “that the life work of Las Casas did much to diminish the volume of Negro slavery and the spiritual corruption attendant upon it.” This non-Catholic writer furthermore declares that “when the work of Las Casas is deeply considered, we cannot make him anything else but an antagonist of human slavery in all its forms, and the mightiest and most effective antagonist, withal, that has ever lived.” F. A. MacNutt in his work “Bartholomew De Las Casas,” page 98, speaks of him in like manner. In connection with Negro slavery in the West Indies it should be said that the famous Cardinal Ximenes, of Spain, had protested already in 1516 against the recruiting of Negro slaves in Africa as then carried on for the West Indies.

rable encyclical in which the following strong language occurs:

"By virtue of our Apostolic office, we warn and admonish in the Lord all Christians of whatever conditions they may be, and enjoin upon them that for the future, no one shall venture unjustly to oppress the Indians, Negroes or other men whoever they may be, to strip them of their property, or reduce them into servitude, or give aid or support to those who commit such excesses or carry on that infamous traffic by which the blacks, as if they were not men, but mere impure animals reduced like them into servitude, contrary to the laws of justice and humanity, are bought, sold and devoted to endure the hardest labor. Wherefore, by virtue of our Apostolic authority, we condemn all these things as absolutely unworthy of the Christian name."<sup>12</sup>

Probably the most memorable statement of the history and Catholic position on slavery is the beautiful letter which Pope Leo XIII, in 1888, addressed to the Brazilian Bishops, exhorting them to banish from their country the remnants of slavery—a letter to which the Bishops responded with their most energetic efforts. Some generous slave-owners freed their slaves in a body, as in the first ages of the Church. Catholic Brazil emancipated its slaves without war or bloodshed. The following are some extracts from the Pope's letter:

"The condition of slavery, in which a considerable part of the human family has been sunk in squalor and affliction now for many centuries, is deeply to be deplored; for the system is one wholly opposed to that which was originally ordained by God and by nature. The Supreme Author of all things so decreed that man should exercise a sort of royal dominion over beasts and cattle and fish and fowl, but never that man should exercise a like dominion over his fellow-man. \* \* \* \* \* Monuments, laws, institutions, through a continuous series of ages, teach and splendidly demonstrate the great love of the Church towards slaves, whom in their miserable condition, she never left destitute of protection, and always to the best of her power alleviated. Therefore, praise and thanks are due to the Catholic Church, since she has merited it

<sup>12</sup> Cardinal Gibbons, *op. cit.*, p. 434.

in the prosperity of nations, by the very great beneficence of Christ, our Redeemer and banisher of slavery, and cause of true liberty, fraternity and equality among men. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, when the base stain of slavery was almost blotted out from among Christian nations, the Catholic Church took the greatest care that the evil germs of such depravity should nowhere revive. Therefore, she directed her provident vigilance to the newly-discovered regions of Africa, Asia and America, for a report had reached her that the leaders of the expeditions, Christians though they were, were wickedly making use of their arms and ingenuity to establish and impose slavery on those innocent nations. Indeed, since the crude nature of the soil which they had to overcome, nor less the wealth of metals which had to be extracted by mining, required very hard work, unjust and inhuman plans were entered into; for a new traffic was begun, slaves being transported for that purpose from Ethiopia, which at that time, under the name of the *slave trade*, too much occupied those colonies.”<sup>13</sup>

The fact that the Catholic Church has been a leader of mankind to light and Christian liberty is attested by leading non-Catholic scholars and historians. The historian Lecky, who holds no brief for Catholicism, says: “The Catholic Church was the very heart of Christendom and the spirit that radiated from her penetrated into all the relations of life. Catholicism laid the very foundations of modern civilization. Herself the most admirable of all organizations, there was formed beneath her influence, a vast network of organizations—political, municipal and social—which supplied a large proportion of the materials of almost every modern structure. In the transition from slavery to serfdom, and in the transition from serfdom to liberty, she was the most zealous, the most unwearied and the most efficient agent.”<sup>14</sup> The French Protestant Guizot says: “There can be no doubt that the Catholic Church struggled resolutely against the great vices of the social state—against slavery,

<sup>13</sup> Leo XIII to the Bishops of Brazil in a Letter dated Rome, May 5, 1888. Among the strong opponents of slavery before and during the Civil War in America was the noted Catholic philosopher and publicist, Orestes A. Brownson. His views on slavery and allied questions are found in his “Works,” Vol. XVII, edited by his son, Henry F. Brownson.

<sup>14</sup> Lecky, “History of Rationalism,” Vol. II, pp. 31–32.



for instance. These facts are so well known that it is needless for me to enter into details." <sup>15</sup>

Speaking of the development of the colored race under Catholic influence, Dr. Blyden, a noted Negro scholar, wrote in *Frazer's Magazine* for May, 1870, the following words, which he afterwards incorporated into his *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*:

"The thoughtful and cultivated Protestant Negro, though he may, *ex animo*, subscribe to the tenets of the particular denomination to which he belongs, as approaching nearest to the teaching of God's word, yet he cannot read history without feeling a deep debt of gratitude to the Roman Catholic Church. The only Christian Negroes who have had the power to successfully throw off oppression and maintain their position as freemen were Roman Catholic Negroes—the Haitiens; and the greatest Negro the Christian world has yet produced was a Roman Catholic—Toussaint L'Ouverture. In the ecclesiastical system of modern, as was the case in the military system of ancient Rome, there seems to be a place for all races and colors. At Rome the names of Negroes, males as well as females, who have been distinguished for piety and good works, are found in the calendar under the designation of saints." <sup>16</sup>

Coming to America, we find that from the beginning of our history, the Christian forces, which in the past strove to civilize and Christianize the old world, have exerted themselves in behalf of the oppressed in the New World. Catholic missionaries have always felt constrained to carry out the injunction of the Divine Savior to his apostles, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." <sup>17</sup> Their object was not to gain gold or worldly for-

<sup>15</sup> Guizot, "History of Civilization," Lect. VI.

<sup>16</sup> Blyden, "Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race," p. 46. A recent work entitled "Slavery in Germanic Society During the Middle Ages," by Dr. Agnes Wergeland, late professor of history in the University of Wyoming, throws light on the work of the Church in behalf of the oppressed and enslaved. In the preface of this book Prof. J. F. Jameson, of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, declares that "we cannot hope to attain a true understanding of American slavery in some of its essential aspects unless we are somehow made mindful of the history of slavery as a whole."

<sup>17</sup> Mark, 16-15.

tune, but to bring the light of Christian truth to the minds of savage aborigines; to win souls to Christ. To those missionaries, as the Church teaches, the souls of the children of all races are equally precious in the sight of God, whatever may be their individual or racial character. It is for this that they left in young manhood, their relatives and comfortable homes, with a probability of never returning. In early ages, they brought Christianity and civilization to peoples and nations of the lands of the Eastern Hemisphere. After the discovery of the New World by Columbus, they were with the explorers of North and South America. From about 1615 we find them laboring among the Indian tribes from Quebec in Canada to California in the West. Intrepid apostles like Marquette, Breheuf, Menard, Millet, Lallemand, Jogues, Le Moyne, Dablon, Garnier, and a host of others like them blazed the way through the wilderness to labor and suffer and die for the salvation of the Indians. They made records in the service of Christ among the Hurons, Algonquins, Iroquois and Mohawks. To the South, in Florida, Spanish Franciscans fell victims to the treachery of Creeks and Seminoles. In the middle of the last century, before the coming of the settlers, Father De Smet spent nearly forty years among the tribes of the great Western plains and in the Rocky Mountain region. Other missionaries in Western Canada penetrated the North as far as the Arctic Circle. In the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century, a frail and slender man, in the person of the learned and saintly Archbishop Charles J. Seghers, journeyed thousands of miles, to bring the message of the Master to the red men in the vast territory of distant Alaska. In California, Arizona and Texas, the traveler meets with many evidences and monuments of the work of early Spanish Catholic missionaries among the Indians. The records show that in some instances, the missionaries were accompanied by Negroes. Probably the first Negro whose name is recorded in North American history is that of Estevan, or Stephen, who accompanied Father Marcos de Niza, in 1536, on a missionary

expedition into the territory of the present States of Arizona and New Mexico.<sup>18</sup>

It is at a later period, however, than that of these early missionaries, that the coming of the Negro as a notable part of the population of the American Colonies begins. This growth takes its rise with the revival of the slave trade in America after the first importation of slaves brought to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. There was long a demand for laborers, and thus an increasing number of slaves were brought from Africa to the various colonies on the Atlantic seaboard, from Massachusetts to Louisiana. British ships at that time supplied not only English colonies with slave labor, but also those of France and Spain.<sup>19</sup> Catholic colonists were confined to Maryland and Louisiana. They also had slaves in their homes and on their plantations, but it is known that they provided for their religious needs and were obliged by their religion to regard their slaves as human beings and not as mere chattels. Under Lord Baltimore's government in the English Colony of Maryland, the Catholic Proprietary himself tells us in his answer to the Lords in 1676, concerning the law that had been enacted "to encourage the baptizing and the instructing of those kinds of servants in the faith of Christ."<sup>20</sup> There had been remissness towards the slaves in this respect among other sections of the population, but such denominations were spurred to action by the example of Catholics. The work of Spanish and French missionaries, as Dr. Woodson points out, influenced the education of the Negro throughout America.<sup>21</sup> The freedom and welfare of the unhappy slaves were especially promoted in the famous "Code Noir," the most humane legislation in their behalf which had been devised before the repeal of slavery. In 1724, M. de Bienville drew up the "Code Noir," containing all the legislation applicable to slaves in Louisiana, which remained in force until

<sup>18</sup> Details of this expedition are found in "The Franciscans in Arizona," by Fr. Zephyrim Englehardt, O.F.M.

<sup>19</sup> French "Historical Collections of Louisiana," Vol. III, p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Russell, "Maryland, The Land of Sanctuary," p. 268.

<sup>21</sup> Woodson, "The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861," pp. 23-42.

1803. This code, signed in the name of the King, and inspired by Catholic teaching and practice, was probably based on a similar code, which was promulgated in 1685, in Santo Domingo, by Louis XIV, King of France. The Edict ordained that all slaves be instructed and that they be admitted to the sacraments and rites of the Roman Catholic Church. It allowed the slave time for instruction, worship and rest, not only every Sunday, but every festival usually observed by the Church. It prohibited under severe penalties all masters and managers from corrupting their female slaves, and provided for the Christian marriage of the slave. It did not allow the Negro, husband, wife or infant children, to be sold separately. It forbade the use of torture or immoderate and inhuman punishments. It obliged the owners to maintain their old and decrepit slaves. If the Negroes were not fed or clothed as the law prescribed, or if they were in any way cruelly treated, they might apply to the procurer, who was obliged by his office to protect them. A somewhat similar edict, known as the Spanish Code, was promulgated in the Spanish West Indies in 1789.

At the time of the Revolutionary War such Catholic patriots as Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, the Polish General Kosciuszko, and General Lafayette, of France, gave evidence of their interest in the improvement of the Negro. Kosciuszko provided in his will that the property which he acquired in America should be used for the purchase of slaves to be educated for higher service and citizenship.<sup>22</sup> Lafayette persistently urged that the blacks be educated and emancipated.<sup>23</sup>

The impression seems to prevail in some quarters that the Catholic Church in the United States has been indifferent to the welfare of the Negro. Sir Harry H. Johnston in his work, *The Negro in the New World*, rather unjustly asserts that the Church maintains "nothing in the way of Negro education and has never at any time shown particular sympathy or desire to help the Negro slave." At the

<sup>22</sup> *African Repository*, XI, 294-295.

<sup>23</sup> Woodson, "The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861," pp. 99, 121.

same time he acknowledges that the Roman Catholic Church in the West Indies and South America has been the great opponent of slavery. Johnston states "that the infractions of the Code Noir," and the increased mal-treatment of slaves and free mulattoes did not take place until the Catholic order of Jesuits had been expelled from Saint Dominique about 1766. Here, as in Brazil, and Paraguay, they had exasperated the white colonists by standing up for the natives or the Negro slaves; and in Hispaniola they had endeavored to exact from the local government a full application of the various slave-protecting edicts. Whatever faults and mistakes they may have been guilty of in the nineteenth century, the Jesuits played, for two hundred years, a noble part in acting as a buffer between the Caucasian on the one hand, and the backward peoples on the other.<sup>24</sup>

Before the emancipation of the slaves in the United States, great difficulties prevented the Catholic Church from benefiting the slaves, especially in those parts where the Church had no adherents and no freedom to act. The Church had but a limited number of clergy and small means. The most of the South was predominantly Protestant and in some sections, penal laws were in force against Catholics. In many States laws were enacted against the instruction of slaves in any manner whatever.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, we find Catholic schools in Washington and Baltimore educating Negro children as early as 1829.<sup>25</sup> The Rt. Rev. John England, the first Catholic Bishop of Charleston, South Carolina, who held his office from 1820 until his death in 1842, cared much for the poor friendless slaves. He began to teach them, founding a school for males under the care of a priest, and a school for girls under the care of the Sisters of Mercy. He was compelled to suspend the slave schools by the passage of a law making it criminal to teach a slave to read and write, but he

<sup>24</sup> Johnston, "The Negro in the New World," pp. 142-401.

<sup>25</sup> Woodson, "The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861," p. 139, quoting Special Report of U. S. Com. of Ed., 1871, pp. 205-206.

continued the schools for emancipated blacks.<sup>26</sup> After the Civil War, the authorities of the Church were better enabled to take an active part in meeting the religious needs of the Negro. The Plenary Councils of Baltimore invite the colored people of our country to enter the Catholic Church. To her pastors the Negro is a man with an immortal soul to save. Rome, writing to the Bishops of the United States, on January 31, 1866, in preparation for the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, declares: "It is the mind of the Church that the Bishops of the United States, because of the duty weighing upon them of feeding the Lord's flock, should take council together, in order to bring about in a steady way the salvation and the Christian education of the lately emancipated negroes." When assembled in Council the Bishops of the United States cordially seconded the wishes of Rome by quoting the very words in an entire chapter devoted to the question of the salvation of the colored race. The Council declares: "This is true charity, if not only temporal prosperity of men be increased, but if they are sharers in the highest and inestimable benefits, namely, of that true liberty by which we are called and are sons of God, which Christ, dying on a cross and smiting the enemy of the human race, obtains for all men without any exceptions whatsoever."<sup>27</sup> Eighteen years later, in 1884, the Third Plenary Council, in the same city, renewed the exhortations of the preceding council. Among other things it states: "Out of six millions of colored people there is a very large multitude who stand sorely in need of Christian instruction and missionary labor; and it is evident that in the poor dioceses, in which they are mostly found, it is most difficult to bestow on them the care they need without the generous cooperation of our Catholic people in more prosperous localities. . . . Since the greatest part of the Negroes are as yet outside the fold of Christ, it is a matter of

<sup>26</sup> McElrone, *Memoir to "Bishop England's Works,"* Vol. I, XIV.

<sup>27</sup> *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore*, p. xxviii; also No. 484, p. 244.

necessity to seek workmen inflamed with zeal for souls, who will be sent into this part of the Lord's harvest." <sup>28</sup>

With the encouragement of the higher authorities of the Church, who sought the spiritual welfare and progress of the race, religious orders and missionary associations took up the work for the Negro. The first of these was the Fathers of the Society of St. Joseph, founded by Cardinal Vaughan, of England. They are known as the Josephites and now have priests and missionaries in nearly all Southern States and dioceses. There are also laboring in this field Fathers of the Holy Ghost, as also members of the Society of the African Missions, and the Society of the Divine Word. Furthermore, there are a number of colored and white Sisterhoods conducting orphanages, academies and Christian Schools for colored children.

In the Second and Third Plenary Councils, the Bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States as a body took up the cause of the Negro race. The Bishops have when occasion offered, by word and deed, shown their friendship and zeal in behalf of the Negro. They have individually raised their voices for humanity and the black man. Cardinal Gibbons, who has long been the leading prelate among the American Bishops, has not only often spoken a good word for the Negro, when the occasion called for it, but has proved by actions his Christian spirit and heroic charity. Among the many instances of his zeal and self-sacrifice, it is related that when he was a young priest in charge of the parish of Elk Ridge, near Baltimore, smallpox broke out in the village, and a general exodus at once followed. One old Negro man, lying at the point of death, had been abandoned by his family and was left alone in his cabin, without food or medicine. Father Gibbons, hearing of the case, hastened to the old man's relief; he procured everything necessary for him, and stood by and tended him until he died. He then procured a coffin and having placed the corpse in it, carried it to the graveyard and buried it with

<sup>28</sup> Acts and Decrees of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, No. 239, p. 134.

his own hands.<sup>29</sup> A similar incident is told of Rev. J. A. Cunnane, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, now a pastor in Baltimore. When stationed in Charles County he attended an old colored man during an epidemic of smallpox, "took the body to the grave on a wheelbarrow, and with his own hands buried it."<sup>30</sup>

Cardinal Gibbons, some years ago, wrote a letter in which occur the following sentiments:

"What then is the first need of the colored people? A sound religious education; an education that will bring them to a practical knowledge of God, that will teach them their origin and the sublime destiny that awaits them in a better world; an education that will develop their superior being, that will inspire them with the love of wisdom and hatred for sin, that will make them honest, moral and God-fearing men. Such an education will elevate and ennoble them and place them on a religious footing with the white man.

"And secondly, it is a matter of observation that few colored people are mechanics. Now, to be a factor in their country's prosperity, to make their presence felt and to give any influence whatever to their attempts to better their status, it is absolutely necessary that, besides a sound religious training they should be taught to be useful citizens; they should be brought up from childhood to habits of industry. They should be taught that to labor is honorable, and that the idler is a menace to the commonwealth. Institutions should be founded wherein the young men may learn the trades best suited to their inclinations. Thus equipped—on the one hand well-instructed Christians, on the other skilled workmen—our colored people may look forward hopefully to the future. I am happy to bear testimony from personal observation to the many virtues exhibited among so many of the colored people of Maryland, especially their deep sense of religion, their gratitude for favors shown, and their affectionate disposition."<sup>31</sup>

The Cardinal used his great influence against the lynch-

<sup>29</sup> This brings to mind the fact that, in one burial lot in Calvary Cemetery, Memphis, Tennessee, lie the bodies of twenty-one priests and some fifty Catholic Sisters who fell victims of yellow fever, while nursing the sick during the great epidemics which raged in that city during 1873 and 1878.

<sup>30</sup> Reilly, "Life and Times of Cardinal Gibbons," Vol. II, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Riley, "Passing Events in the Life of Cardinal Gibbons," App. X.



ing evil and in an article in the *North American Review* for October, 1905, pronounced lynching "a blot on our American civilization."<sup>32</sup> It should be stated too that in Catholic countries of Central and South America we rarely ever hear of lynching nor of unnatural crimes which provoke it. In an address announcing "Colorphobia" as a "malignantly unchristian disease," Mr. John C. Minkins, a journalist, not long ago told a Baptist Ministers' Conference of Providence, Rhode Island, that the lynchings in the United States are nearly all in States where there are scarcely any Catholics. He based his statements on figures from the Research Bureau of the Negro Industrial Institute at Tuskegee, Alabama.<sup>33</sup>

In March, 1904, Cardinal Gibbons wrote the following letter to the Rev. George F. Bragg, of Baltimore:

"In reply to your letter of yesterday, I hasten to say that the introduction of the 'Jim Crow' bill into the Maryland Legislature is very distressing to me. Such a measure must of necessity engender very bitter feelings in the colored people against the whites. Peace and harmony can never exist where there is unjust discrimination, and where the members of every community must constantly strive for its peace, especially now in the hour of our affliction. While calamity and disaster are frowning upon our city, mutual helpfulness should be the common endeavor and no action should be lightly taken which would precipitate enmities, strife and acrimonious feelings. The duty of every man is to lighten the burdens that weigh heavily upon his neighbor to the full extent of his power. It is equally the duty of every member of a community to avoid any action which is calculated to make hard and bitter the lot of a less fortunate race. Furthermore, it would be most injudicious to make the whole race suffer for the delinquencies of a few individuals, to visit upon thousands who are innocent that punishment and chastisement which should be meted out to the guilty alone."

Hostile legislation to the colored people was opposed by a noted Catholic layman of Maryland, the Hon. Charles J. Bonaparte, Attorney General of the United States, under

<sup>32</sup> Will, "Life of Cardinal Gibbons," p. 361.

<sup>33</sup> Judge Thomas Lee, in "America," p. 495, New York, March, 1917.

President Roosevelt. Mr. Bonaparte rendered service and wrote sympathetic words to Mr. Bragg, in 1904, concerning the proposed restriction of the elective franchise. He said: "Whatever the restrictions imposed, they should be the same for all citizens; there should not be one law for white men and another law for black men, one law for Americans of two generations and another for Americans of three." <sup>34</sup>

The distinguished Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, John Ireland, a man of wide influence, on May 5, 1890, spoke on the race problem in a sermon delivered at St. Augustine's Church, Washington, D. C. Secretary Windom, Recorder Bruce, the whole Minnesota delegation to Congress and many Senators and others prominent in public life were among the congregation. The bold and outspoken stand of the Archbishop on this occasion created somewhat of a sensation throughout America. Among other things he said:

"It make me ashamed as a man, as a citizen, as a Christian, to see the prejudice that is acted against the colored citizens of America because of his color. As to the substance, the colored man is equal to the white man; he has a like intellect, the same blood courses in their veins; they are both equally the children of a common Father, who is in heaven. A man shows a narrowness of mind and becomes unworthy of his humanity by refusing any privilege to his fellowman because he is colored. Every prejudice entertained, every breach of justice and charity against a fellow-citizen because of color is a stain flung upon the banner of our liberty that floats over us. No church is a fit temple of God where a man, because of his color, is excluded or made to occupy a corner. Religion teaches that we cannot be pleasing to God unless we look upon all mankind as children of our Father in heaven. And they who order and compel a man because he is colored to betake himself to a corner marked off for his race, practically contradict the principles of justice and of equal rights established by the God of Mercy, who lives on the altar. Let Christians act out their religion, and there is no more race problem. Equality for the colored man is coming. The colored people are showing themselves worthy of it. Let the colored be industrious, purchase homes, respect law and

<sup>34</sup> Bragg, "Men of Maryland," p. 131.

order, educate themselves and their children, and keep insisting on their rights. The color line must go; the line will be drawn at personal merit.”<sup>35</sup>

There may be cited other instances of the friendly interest of leading prelates and Bishops of the Church in the welfare of the Negro and of care for their spiritual interests. They have ever been anxious that justice be done to the race. The late Pope Pius X, sometime before his death, wrote a letter through his secretary to the Rt. Rev. Thomas S. Byrne, Bishop of Nashville, Tennessee, saying that he “most earnestly wishes that the work of the Apostolate to the colored people, worthy of being encouraged and applauded beyond any other undertaking of Christian civilization, may find numerous and generous contributors.”

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<sup>35</sup> Riley, “Passing Events in the Life of Cardinal Gibbons,” p. 365.